

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06

PRS-01 SP-02 ISO-00 /030 W
----- 094063

R 281043Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8741
INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH
AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK

SUBJECT: QUEEN'S CIVIL LIST BUDGET APPROVED

REF: LONDON 2799

1. HOUSE OF COMMONS, BY OVERWHELMING 427 TO 90 VOTE, APPROVED INCREASED CIVIL LIST (ROYAL HOUSEHOLD) BUDGET FOLLOWING VIGOROUS AND OCCASIONALLY BITTER DEBATE (REF-TEL). PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY (PLP) WAS BADLY SPLIT ON ISSUE, WITH ONLY 74 LABOR MPS VOTING FOR INCREASE, WHILE 89 VOTED AGAINST AND OVER 50 DELIBERATELY ABSTAINED

2. GOVERNMENT WHIP ORIGINALLY ISSUED 'TWO-LINE WHIP' (SHOULD BE PRESENT, SHOULD SUPPORT GOVERNMENT) BUT WHIP WAS WITHDRAWN AFTER INTERVENTION OF SEVERAL CABINET MINISTERS, ALLOWING LABOR MPS A FREE VOTE. TORIES HAD THREE-LINE WHIP (MUST BE PRESENT, MUST VOTE WITH PARTY).

3. ACCORDING TO LABOR BACKBENCH SOURCES, MINISTERS OPPOSING CIVIL LIST BECAUSE OF ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL CONTRACT (REFTEL) WERE ABLE TO PERSUADE GOVERNMENT TO WITHDRAW WHIP, AS THERE WAS NO DANGER BILL WOULD FAIL, THEREBY AVOIDING FURTHER EROSION PARTY DISCIPLINE AND
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INTENSIFICATION OF BACKBENCH HOSTILITY. THOSE OPPOSING

EXISTING TAX EXEMPTIONS ENJOYED BY QUEEN AND OTHER MEMBERS OF ROYAL FAMILY REGARD THESE DEVELOPMENTS AS VICTORY FOR THEIR POSITION AND HOPE TO FORCE GOVERNMENT TO APPOINT SELECT COMMITTEE TO REVIEW QUESTION OF TAX EXEMPTION WITHIN NEXT FEW MONTHS. PLP CHAIRMAN CLEDWYN HUGHES, WHO SUPPORTED CIVIL LIST INCREASE, TOLD EMBOFFS THAT HE BELIEVES QUEEN IS RECEIVING VERY POOR POLITICAL ADVICE AND THAT THIS ADVICE IS PREJUDICING HER INTERESTS.

4. COMMENT: DECISION TO ALLOW PLP FREE VOTE ON THIS CONTENTIOUS ISSUE WAS SOUND POLITICAL DECISION, AS IT LIMITED DAMAGE TO LABOR PARTY DISCIPLINE WHICH HAS HAD VERY ROUGH GO IN RECENT MONTHS. THE MEANING OF THE FINAL VOTE WAS PROBABLY BEST SUMMARIZED BY LABOR WHIP ROBERT MELLISH, WHO TOLD PRESS THAT: "ANY INTERPRETATION THAT THIS IS AN ANTI-ROYALIST VOTE WILL BE A MISCONSTRUCTION BY THOSE WHO DID NOT HEAR THE DEBATE. THE DESIRE OF MOST OF THOSE WHO VOTED IN THE LOBBY TONIGHT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IS THAT OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE DESPERATELY ANXIOUS THAT THERE SHALL BE AN EQUALITY AMONG ALL CITIZENS IN THE DISCLOSURE OF INCOME FOR TAX PURPOSES. THAT IS WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT..'

SPIERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: QUEEN, BUDGETS, PUBLIC DISCLOSURE, LEGISLATIVE BILLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON03083
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750071-0136
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975023/aaaaaclm.tel
Line Count: 85
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LONDON 2799
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <05 NOV 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: QUEEN'S CIVIL LIST BUDGET APPROVED
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006